

Truck accidents linked to early morning hauling

By **Barbara Duckworth**
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Driver fatigue is the major cause of livestock trucking accidents in Canada and the United States.

Jennifer Woods, a livestock transportation consultant from Blackie, Alta., said she has found that nearly 60 percent of accidents occur between midnight and 9 a.m.

“One of our biggest problems is we load out at 1 a.m. in the morning,” said Woods, who provides livestock trucker training courses in affiliation with Alberta Farm Animal Care.

“These guys are tired because they should be asleep in the middle of the night.”

Woods said truckers are also under considerable pressure to deliver loads on time. Livestock may be hauled from one province to another in the middle of the night to meet a packing plant schedule first thing in the morning. As well, pigs may travel at night during the summer when it is cooler.

“The drivers are not exceeding their hours but it is a combination of the

demands of the job and the hours they run and how unforgiving the trailers are,” she said.

Fewer accidents might occur if there was a wider appreciation for the demands of the job from the livestock industry, she said.

“Our livestock loads need to be looked at as similar to hauling hazardous material. They are a specialized load and I think our industry needs to look at the plight of our truckers.”

Wood’s research tabulated the results of 415 commercial livestock truck accidents in Canada and the U.S. between 1994 and mid-2007.

The results showed driver error was blamed for 85 percent of the accidents and only one percent blamed bad weather. The most accidents occurred in October, followed by November, August, April and May.

More than half the accidents involved cattle trucks, nearly a third carried pigs and a smaller amount involved poultry.

Part of the solution is addressed in a new certified livestock transport

Driver fatigue linked to rollovers

Many people assume bad weather is to blame when livestock transport trucks are in rollover accidents. However, data collected by Jennifer Woods, a livestock consultant from Blackie, Alta., shows that driver fatigue is a major factor in a high percentage of truck accidents.

Woods tabulated the results of 415 commercial livestock truck accidents in Canada and the United States from January 1994 to June 2007. Here are the results:



- 59 percent of the accidents occurred from midnight to 9 a.m.
- 80 percent involved a single vehicle.
- Driver error was blamed for 85 percent of the accidents.
- In 83 percent of the accidents, the vehicle rolled over.
- 84 percent of those trucks rolled to the right.
- One percent of the reports identified weather conditions as the cause of the accident. The winter months did not record the highest number of

- accidents; more accidents happened in October, followed by November, August, April and May.
- 56 percent of all accidents involved cattle trucks, 27 percent involved pigs and 11 percent poultry.
- Of 169 documented cattle truck accidents, 23 percent involved trucks hauling fed beef while 70 percent involved feeders and calves.
- Of 103 documented swine truck accidents, 80 percent involved trucks hauling market hogs, 16 percent involved feeder or weaner pigs and three percent involved sows.

Source: Jennifer Woods

WP graphic

training course that became available this year. The course provides a section on accident prevention.

Initiated in Alberta, the goal is to

make this a national program.

Alberta Farm Animal Care has pushed for improved livestock transportation training and driver guidelines.

“If our goal is to help improve animal care and well being, having fewer accidents is one way to do it,” said manager Susan Church.